

STAMPS & COINS

\$3 bills worthless? Don't be so sure

By Roger Boye

This week's column answers more questions from Tribune readers.

Q—I have a bet going with my aunt. I say the federal government circulated \$3 bills years ago, but she thinks that is nonsense. Who's right?—T.L., Lockport.

A—Your aunt wins. Uncle Sam has issued currency for more than 120 years, but never in the \$3 denomination.

Perhaps you were thinking of the so-called "broken bank notes." During the 1800s, many government-chartered [but privately owned] banks printed their own currency, including bills in such odd amounts as \$3, \$7 and even \$1.75.

Although the old bank notes are no longer legal tender, many are prized collectors' items. Whoever said, "Nothing is as worthless as a \$3 bill"?

Q—After collecting coins for nearly five years, my wife and I think the designs on Canadian coins outclass what the U.S. produces. Where does Canada make its "small change," and how can we order collector specimens?—L.A., Chicago.

A—Canada produces coins in three cities—Ottawa [the capital], Hull and Winnipeg—but no modern-day Canadian coins carry mint marks. The machines at Hull, in Quebec province, churn out gold and silver commemoratives, as well as coins for three types of collector sets.

I'll send you the detailed ordering information in your addressed, stamped envelope. The material is also available by writing to the Royal Canadian Mint, P.O. Box 457, Station A, Ottawa, Ont. K1N 8V5, Canada.

Q—I'm told that the new zinc cents are magnetic, unlike their copper cousins. If so, isn't a magnet all that's needed to tell them apart?—G.K., Chicago.

A—Contrary to popular belief, zinc cents are not magnetic. Many people confuse the new coins with zinc-coated steel cents made during World War II.

First-day Locomotive issue chugs into town

By Les Winick

Boris was dressed to the hilt. Since I had never seen him with a jacket matching his pants, his appearance came as a shock to me. I had to ask where he was going.

"I'll be going to a first-day ceremony, of course. The postmaster general invited me to a ceremony dedicating the Locomotive stamp in the main waiting room of Chicago's Union Station. It's happening at 11 a.m. Thursday, and I expect to get a free first-day program."

Everyone is invited. The 2-cent stamp is printed in coils of 500 and 3,000 with a plate number on every 24th stamp. Chicago was selected as the first-day city because of the vast railroad network here. First-day cancels can be obtained from the Postmaster, Chicago, Ill. 60607. Previous stamps in the Transportation series are the

Surrey, Electric Auto, Fire Pumper, Mail Wagon, Bicycle and the Hansom Cab.

Of course, it would have been nicer if the stamp had been issued one week later to coincide with the COMPEX stamp exhibition that will open May 28. Perhaps the postal service has to be reminded that it is stamp collectors who buy these commemoratives and don't use them for postage.

● Friday will be the first day of issue of the 20-cent Aging stamp. Sun City, home of many Midwest retirees, has been selected as the first-day city. Cancels can be obtained from Postmaster, Sun City, Ariz. 65351.

● There are two varieties of perforations on the Birds and Flowers sheets of stamps. The easiest way to spot the difference is that one type has holes to the edges of the sheets. The other type of sheets has holes only between the stamps and not to the narrow selvage area.

The varieties came as a surprise to postal officials. It is not known how many sheets exist of each type, but collectors are certain to be on the lookout for each kind of pane of stamps.